

Message Text

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INFO USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 3989

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR

SUBJ: THE CAUSES OF DECREASING SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRATION

1. SUMMARY: THROUGH A VARIETY OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT DEVICES THE REGIME HAS BEEN ABLE TO PROMOTE AN ATMOSPHERE OF UNCERTAINTY AMONG EMIGRATION-MINDED SOVIET JEWS ABOUT APPLYING FOR EXIT PERMISSION. THE QUANTITY OF APPLICATIONS APPEARS TO BE DOWN. A GOOD PERCENTAGE OF JEWS SEEM TO BE DELAYING THEIR APPLICATIONS BECAUSE THEY SENSE THAT THE TIME IS NOT RIGHT FOR SUCH A STEP. WE ESTIMATE THAT IF THE REGIME FOUND IT IN ITS INTERESTS TO REDUCE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE ON PROSPECTIVE EMIGRANTS AND REMOVE SOME OF THE STRICTURES ON EMIGRATION, THE EMIGRATION RATE WOULD BEGIN TO INCREASE SIGNIFICANTLY AND RELATIVELY RAPIDLY. END SUMMARY.

2. UNLESS CONDITIONS CHANGE, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRATION IS HEADED FOR ANOTHER SUBSTANTIAL DECREASE THIS YEAR --THUS FAR IT IS RUNNING ABOUT 40 PERCENT BELOW 1974 (WHICH IS TURN WAS OVER 40 PERCENT DOWN FROM 1973). WHILE FUTURE MONTHLY EMIGRATION TOTALS ARE SOMEWHAT UNPREDICTABLE (WITNESS THE LARGE INCREASE IN THE LAST FIVE MONTHS OF 1973),

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THE GENERAL PATTERN IS EVIDENT. WE HAVE QUERIED LOCAL

SOVIET JEWISH SOURCES ABOUT THIS DECREASE AND FIND A COMPLEX OF CAUSES RELATING BOTH TO PROCEDURAL ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES AND TO THE ATTITUDES OF POTENTIAL JEWISH EMIGRANTS.

3. PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE SOVIET MEDIA CAMPAIGN PLAYING ON PROBLEMS IN ISRAEL AND THE WEST HAS HAD A GREAT DEAL TO DO WITH DECREASING THE NUMBER OF EXIT APPLICATIONS BY SOVIET JEWS. IN THE LAST MONTH ALONE WE HAVE SEEN SOME HALF-DOZEN ARTICLES IN THE CENTRAL PRESS CENTERED ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FORMER SOVIET JEWS ARE HAVING ONCE THEY EMIGRATE. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, THE PRESS REPORTS OF PROBLEMS OF ASSIMILATION AND OF BAD FEELING BETWEEN AMERICAN AND ISRAELI JEWS AND SOVIET EMIGRANTS INFLUENCE POTENTIAL EMIGRANTS EVEN MORE THAN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THE CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE WEST IS PRECARIOUS. OUR SOURCES ALSO TELL US THAT THE LOCAL PRESS OUTSIDE MOSCOW, PARTICULARLY IN TRADITIONAL AREAS OF JEWISH SETTLEMENT, HAS HARPED ON THESE PROBLEMS EVEN MORE ACTIVELY. ADDITIONALLY, PESSIMISTIC DESCRIPTIONS OF LIFE IN ISRAEL IMPARTED THROUGH LETTERS AND TELEPHONE CALLS WHICH HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO COME INTO THE COUNTRY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE UNCERTAINTY OF SOVIET JEWS ABOUT THE LIFE THAT AWAITS THEM OUTSIDE. PERHAPS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT IS THE FACT THAT THE INTENSITY OF THE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN INDICATES TO PROSPECTIVE EMIGRANTS THAT THE CURRENT ATTITUDE OF THE REGIME TOWARD EMIGRATION IS MORE NEGATIVE THAN FORMERLY. THIS PERCEPTION STRONGLY REINFORCES THE TENDENCY TO WAIT FOR A BETTER TIME TO APPLY FOR EXIT PERMISSION.

4. SOME AREAS BEING CLEANED OUT. OUR SOURCES ALSO SAY THE PUSH FOR EMIGRATION FROM RURAL REGIONS LIKE THE WESTERN UKRAINE, MOLDAVIA, GEORGIA AND SOME PARTS OF CENTRAL ASIA HAS LESSENED. THERE APPARENTLY STILL IS A GOOD DEAL OF LATENT DESIRE FOR EMIGRATION IN THESE AREAS, BUT IT IS NOT NEARLY AS STRONG AS IT WAS BEFORE THE FIRST WAVE OF EMIGRANTS WAS ALLOWED TO LEAVE, AND IT IS MORE SUBJECT TO MANIPULATION BY

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THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

5. SELECTED REFUSALS. WE ARE TOLD THE AUTHORITIES CONTINUE TO REFUSE A CAREFULLY SELECTED VARIETY OF JEWISH APPLICANTS, GENERALLY ON "SECURITY" GROUNDS, BUT OFTEN WITH LITTLE APPARENT REASON. JEWISH ACTIVISTS BELIEVE THIS TACTIC IS DESIGNED TO FEED THE FEELING THAT THE PROCESS OF APPLICATION FOR EXIT IS AT BEST

UNCERTAIN AND TO DISSUADE ALL BUT THE MOST CONVINCED
POTENTIAL EMIGRANTS FROM APPLYING. RECENTLY, FOR
INSTANCE, THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTED REFUSALS IN AREAS
OF CENTRAL ASIA, WHERE FORMERLY ALMOST ALL APPLICANTS
WERE ALLOWED TO LEAVE. LOCAL SOURCES SAY THAT EVEN A
SMALL NUMBER OF SUCH REFUSALS CAN AFFECT THE ATTITUDES
OF HUNDREDS OF PROSPECTIVE EMIGRANTS, SINCE THE
POSSIBILITY OF REFUSAL AND EITHER LOSING EMPLOYMENT OR
AT LEAST RECEIVING REDUCED PAY MUST BE CAREFULLY FACTORED
INTO THE DECISION OF WHETHER TO APPLY. THE FACT THAT
SOME LONG-TIME JEWISH "REFUSENIKS" HAVE RECENTLY
RECEIVED PERMISSION TO LEAVE MAY ACT TO COUNTER SOMEWHAT
THE GENERAL PERCEPTION OF THE REGIME'S CURRENTLY MORE
NEGATIVE APPROACH TOWARD EMIGRATION, BUT SINCE THIS
APPLIES TO OLD CASES, IT PROBABLY IS AIMED AT KEEPING
MOSCOW JEWISH ACTIVISTS QUIET AND WOULD NOT APPEAR TO

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HAVE TOO MUCH EFFECT ON THE ATTITUDES OF THOSE
THINKING OF APPLYING.

6. SHOW CASES AND OTHER EXAMPLES OF HARASSMENT.
THE TRIAL AND SENTENCING (EIGHT YEARS IMPRISONMENT WITH
CONFISCATION OF PROPERTY) OF DR. MIKHAIL SHTERN IN THE
UKRAINIAN CITY OF VINNITSA HAS APPARENTLY PLAYED A
LARGE ROLE IN PRODUCING CAUTIOUS ATTITUDES TOWARD

EMIGRATION AMONG SOME JEWS. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF THIS CASE HAS BEEN BUTTRESSED BY THE RECENT ARRESTS, AFTER A BRIEF STREET DEMONSTRATION IN MOSCOW, OF TWO WELL-KNOWN JEWISH ACTIVISTS -- MARK NASHPITS AND BORIS TSETLENOK -- AND RUMORS THAT THEY WILL BE CHARGED WITH "ANTI-SOVIET" CRIMES AND SEVERLY PUNISHED. LOCAL JEWS SAY THIS CASE IS MEANT BOTH TO FRIGHTEN ACTIVISTS AND TO PRODUCE THE GENERAL IMPRESSION THAT THE AUTHORITIES ARE TAKING A HARDER LINE ON EMIGRATION, THEREBY DAMPENING THE DESIRE AMONG JEWS TO APPLY FOR EXIT PERMISSION. OTHER EXAMPLES OF HARASSMENT, WHICH ARE SAID TO PRODUCE AN UNCERTAIN ATMOSPHERE ON EMIGRATION ARE (A) CUTOFFS OF COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE WEST -- SOME ACTIVISTS SAY THEY HAVE NOT RECEIVED A LETTER FROM OUTSIDE IN MONTHS AND THAT IT IS HARDER THAN EVER TO PLACE A CALL TO OR RECEIVE ONE FROM THE WEST; (B) RUMORS THAT THE CHILDREN OF EMIGRATION

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APPLICANTS ARE BEING HARASSED IN THE SCHOOLS; (C) PERIODIC DETENTION OF ACTIVISTS FOR QUESTIONING AND WARNINGS THAT ACTION MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST THEM FOR "PARASITIC BEHAVIOR"; (D) VAGUENESS ON THE PART OF AUTHORITIES ON WHAT GOODS AND POSSESSIONS MAY BE TAKEN OUT BY EMIGRANTS; (E) GRANTING OF EXIT PERMISSION TO ELDERLY PARENTS WHILE REFUSING OR DELAYING PERMISSION FOR ADULT CHILDREN. (THIS, OUR SOURCES SAY, ACCOUNTS FOR THE SOVIET CLAIM OF LARGE NUMBERS OF RETURNED EXIT VISAS -- MANY ELDERLY PARENTS WOULD NOT CONSIDER LEAVING ALONE.)

7. CONTROL OF THE EMIGRATION FLOW. BECAUSE OF THE OTHER INSTRUMENTS OF PRESSURE CITED ABOVE, THE AUTHORITIES DO NOT HAVE TO INCREASE THE REFUSAL RATE VERY MUCH TO KEEP THE OVERALL EMIGRATION RATE AT A LOW LEVEL. RATHER, THIS CAN BE DONE MORE SUBTLY BY CONTROLLING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ATMOSPHERE AMONG PROSPECTIVE EMINGRANTS AND BY MAINTAINING THE PERCEPTION THAT EXIT APPLICATION IS A PRECARIOUS STEP. IF THE REGIME FOUND IT IN ITS INTERESTS TO REDUCE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE ON PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS AND DIMINISH THE HARASSMENT TECHNIQUES, WE FEEL THE EMIGRATION RATE WOULD BEGIN TO RISE SIGNIFICANTLY AND RELATIVELY RAPIDLY.

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